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SUBJECT: Santiago Dec. 16 Media Report

Lead Story

¶1. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) officially invited Chile to join (All dailies, 12/16).

OECD

¶2. After over two years of work and six million Euros spent on missions and reports, the Bachelet administration achieved one of its major goals: Chile's membership in the OECD. The organization's Secretary General, Angel Gurría, will visit Santiago in January to meet with President Bachelet and sign the official agreement for Chile's accession. The agreement must then be ratified by Congress. Chile is the first South American country to join the OECD (Conservative, influential El Mercurio, 12/16).

U.S.-Related news

¶3. President Obama announced the government's decision to buy the Thompson Correctional Center in Illinois to transfer prisoners from Guantanamo. This shows that the president is working on fulfilling his promise to close the naval base before the end of his first year in office. The transfer of prisoners accused of terrorism to the United States is, however, an especially sensitive matter (Conservative, independent La Tercera, 12/16).

Former President Frei's death

¶4. Doctor Fernando Orrego of the University of Chile medical school was categorical in his statement regarding the investigation into former President Frei's death: the forensic experts who tested Frei's remains must clarify what body tissues they used and what methods they applied in their tests. They should also specify the exact amount of the two chemicals found. A final conclusion on whether Frei was poisoned with thallium and sulfuric mustard can only be drawn if that information is available, said Orrego. He explained that studies conducted by the Center for Disease Control, in Atlanta, reveal that small amounts of thallium can be found in individuals who have never been exposed to the element. These studies also recommend not using hair tissue, as one of the Chilean experts did, because testing for poison in hair tends to be highly inaccurate (El Mercurio, 12/16).

Presidential election

15. Composition of the new Senate: Almost half of the senators who will be in office from 2010 to 2014 studied at the University of Chile. The second largest groups are Catholic University alumni. The Senate will also have two private university graduates. Half the senators are attorneys; another large number are engineers. While 68% of senators attended private schools -- versus 57% the previous term-- 37.5% of deputies come from public schools (El Mercurio, 12/16).
SIMONS